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Mt. Spokane Trail Plan 2012 Onward

Summary: The goal of this trail proposal is to increase the utilization of the alpine recreational resource that is Mt. Spokane while increasing the number and variety of biking trails, improving the design of existing trails and decreasing conflicts between users based on mode of recreation. Pursuing these goals is believed to increase revenues generated by this state park and raise the park to the status of a biking destination, thereby bringing in non-local visitors.

Introduction

The growth of mountain biking has been explosive over the past decade. Comparable to skiing and snowboarding, the technology behind mountain biking equipment has evolved more recently and in greater leaps. Riding focus and desires have changed; as a result, the sport itself has progressed. Riders can now challenge themselves on more demanding terrain with more comfort and control than a decade ago. Gravity-assisted riding delivers those challenges in much the same way as downhill skiing offers experiences that cross country skiing cannot. The topography that makes a mountain desirable to ski down also makes it appealing to ride a bike down. The growth of summer-time ski hill conversions for the purpose of biking is a testament to that general suitability to the purpose.

Mount Spokane State Park's current trail system is very popular and heavily used by numerous user groups. Unfortunately, this popularity, compounded by dated trail design, strains maintainability and sustainability. A lack of signage and proper trail markers have resulted in additional erosion and damage due to trail braiding (Trail 135). This damage has forced the park to close trails, thus causing another problem altogether; one of user conflict through concurrent trail usage.

We believe a well-laid-out trail system and a considerable amount of effort (labor and education) from users will solve these problems. When we increase the number of trails, we will spread users out and reduce crossing traffic conflicts by sheer density reduction. When we tailor certain trails to particular uses, we should reduce crossing traffic conflict by almost eliminating opposing traffic. When we spread those trails around the mountain, we will alleviate parking congestion. This proposal will focus on preservation of old trails, expansion and maintenance of new trails, and elimination of braided trails. The product of these efforts will be a high-quality, regionally noteworthy, alpine biking experience that attracts new users and volunteers who won't know what they did before they worked and played at Mt. Spokane in the summer.

General Implementation

- **Trail Maintenance:** A well-maintained trail system is the first step in offering outdoor users a great experience. Keeping existing trails open, clear of debris, and in good condition, will enhance the user experience in the park.
- **Trail Signage:** By providing users with information about each trail, users can make well informed decisions and better anticipate other users' actions. Signage should be familiar and provide information similar to those found at ski resorts. Items such as degree of difficulty, length, description of features, and possible user groups should be disclosed. Please see the accompanying safety document for examples.
- **Avoid and Eliminate Trail Braiding:** When established trails become crowded or rundown, users tend to create their own system of braided trails. Braided trails diminish

- from a user's overall experience and often make an area feel smaller. Additionally, these trails tend to be steep, unsafe, and detrimental to the trail system.
- **Expansion:** This plan will address expansion of the current trail system, helping prevent over-usage and over-crowding, and reducing user-group conflict.
- **Volunteers:** The use of volunteers will help keep costs down. Utilizing volunteer power creates a higher quality community asset than is possible by hiring trail contractors. Furthermore, the volunteers develop a vested interest in the project resulting in a sense of ownership leading to them maintaining the asset over time. Volunteer forces provide a great partnership opportunity with the state that can be accessed throughout the year.
- **Fund Raising:** Establishing new trail systems, especially more challenging ones, provides the opportunity for additional events such as downhill mountain bike races. With the growing popularity of gravity racing (downhill and enduro style) in the United States, Mt. Spokane has the potential to once again become home to National and World level racing ,the likes of which haven't been seen on the mountain since 1995.
- Other Opportunities: Providing a diverse and challenging number of trails opens up the mountain to many of our local, national and world class International Mountain bike Instructor Certified trainers to provide outreach and instruction courses to people in the community.

Mountain Bike Trail Plan

It should be noted that this document is a malleable proposal, not a concrete work plan. As realities such as funding, permissions, local environmental discoveries and access to an available workforce change, so too might the sequence, priority, and feasibility of each proposed trail change.

Projects by five year range

Five year goals (2017)

The first and most crucial project is the re-route and preservation of trail 140 from top to bottom (See map). Mountain bikers today are looking for a top to bottom experience when they ride, and trail 140 will provide this opportunity. With proper maintenance and some minor re-routing from the summit, trail 140 would provide the most direct top to bottom ride. Further designation of this trail as a directional trail for descending would greatly increase the attraction to the biker user group.

The second project will post trail signage to inform all users the types of terrain and traffic they might encounter on each particular trail. Items such as degree of difficulty, grade, length of trail, trail name and types of users will be included on these signs. A system similar to that used for rating ski runs works well here along with a brief written description. Signage provides the opportunity to promote general safety such as wearing a helmet, traveling in a group, carry food and water, etc. Additionally this work would include the construction of trail entrance gates that promote reading of the signs and would slow traffic at the entrances and exits of trails.

The third project will be to introduce a new trail from the summit, past the sno-park, to the ranger station (See map, No Alibi trail). This trail will start at the summit near the entrance to trail 140 and

run down the eastern slope, utilizing the terrain to the southeast of the summit. With trail 140 heading to the west and the new No Alibi trail headed to the east, this plan will effectively split the majority of mountain bikers to the outlying borders of the park, thus reducing mountain bike traffic on more populated trails. Right now the trail system acts like a funnel, forcing all users up and down two drainages, resulting in high-traffic areas. Trail 140, on the west side of the mountain is the only trail that currently keeps most users out of this funnel. The routing of a new east side trail will also prevent users from funneling down to high traffic areas. If a trail is tailored for bike riding, its appeal to mountain bikers will keep them on it.

Briefly:

- Repair, re-route, and maintain Trail 140
- Post trail signage
- New top-to-bottom No Alibi Flow Trail
- Around the World circumnavigation trail extending Trail 130 (if approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission)
- If the Chair 3 lift motor replacement is completed within 5 years, begin work on the ski area trails, described below
- Assist in maintaining the park's shared-use trails

Ten year Goals (2022)

Another large component of this plan is to build three trails that would utilize the designated downhill ski area around Chairs 1, 2, and 3 (See map, DH trails). These trails would start at the summit and end at Lodge 1. The lodge is accessible via car on the paved road and there is a large parking area. Utilizing the ski area will allow for easier trail maintenance via fire access roads. These trails would be more downhill-specific and have a higher degree of difficulty for mountain bikers. This will provide more advanced riders a dedicated place to ride more challenging terrain at higher speeds without the concern of uphill traffic. Currently, if an advanced rider wants a challenge on the Mt. Spokane trails, they are going to add more speed, which could lead to conflict with other users. Adding a challenging downhill trail system could reduce this desire for speed on other trails. Trails in this area would also serve well for downhill mountain bike racing as a revenue-generating event for the park, and eventual development of a lift-accessed trail system.

- Ski area trails (Meadows, 2-face, Rockslide areas)
- Deadman Creek Cross Country (XC) Expansion (SNO Park/Camp Fosseen Area)
- Assist in maintaining the park's shared-use trails

Fifteen year Goals (2027)

- Cooks Cabin Getaway Trail
- Review proposed Burping Brook Area Trail
- Assist in maintaining the park's shared-use trails

Twenty year Goals (2032)

- Additional Parking/Maintenance Lot off Day Mt. Spokane Road
- Deep Creek Cross Country Trail, Day Mt. Spokane Side
- Ouartz Mountain Cross Country Expansion
- Assist in maintaining the park's shared-use trails

All of the above trails begin and end within park boundaries. When considering our goals of decreased user density per trail and increased revenue for the park through well-attended special trail events, the authors also discussed trails which end outside the park. Such trails would require discussion with, and acceptance from, the landowners of the affected properties. While the authors of this trail proposal believe such trails help to achieve the stated goals, initial discussions with landowners has not yet occurred, so those trails are not included in this proposal.

Proposed Trails

A catalogue of currently proposed trails

Evergreen-East Proposed Trails

Trail 140 - Reroute and Rehabilitation

Description:	Improve continuity and durability of a popular trail
Usage:	Bi-directional; multi-use; predominantly descending bike traffic
Notes:	 Upper 140: Rock armor for durability and to challenge the rider Slope changes and water bars for water control Redesign tight corners to reduce hard, prolonged braking which cuts through soil Reroute to eliminate the dip down / climb out portion 800ft. before the Mt. Kit Carson outhouse Lower 140 (outhouse to Smith Gap) Reroute to eliminate the climb up and over Mt. Kit Carson. Resume near recently created portion of 140. Eliminate or modify current 90° uphill turns (they're "gotchas") Smith Gap, Jedi Trees to Bear Creek Lodge Erosion control Trail armoring Decommissioning of cutoff trials.

No Alibi - Top to Bottom

Description:	Create a top-to-bottom trail with rolling features. Minimal pedaling needed to maintain momentum.
Usage:	Bi-directional; multi-use; predominantly descending bike traffic
Notes:	Starts at the ski run 'No Alibi'. Proceeds SSE traversing the fall line in long sweeping segments. Below Bald Knob it goes along the fall line to exit at Hwy 206 just north of the Summit Rd. intersection. After crossing the road riders continue down the Valley View / Deadman Creek draw. Crossing Camp Fosseen as quickly as possible, the trail falls along the grade to meet up with established trails on the south side of 206, ending at the lowest park restroom.

Around the World - circumnavigation of the peak

Description:	Cross Country loop of the Mt. Spokane peak
Usage:	Bidirectional: Multi-use traffic expected
Notes:	Beginning and ending at Bald Knob this trail uses Trail 130 to set the tone for a single-track experience around the mountain. Climbs and descents across the contours are brief. For riders wishing to climb to the summit from the northern portion of the mountain, a route is planned from the top of Chairs 3 & 4 south to the peak. This proposed trail will require approval by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Deadman Creek XC expansion

Description:	Cross Country trails running the perimeter of the Deadman Creek draw.
Usage:	Bidirectional: Multi-use traffic expected
Notes:	 Reroute the steepest climbs on the existing trail from the lowest park restroom to the SNO Park. Add a southern route to the Nova Hut beginning at an intersection with the existing trail at 4200ft. An E-W traversal from the Day Mt. Spokane hairpin turn / parking area crossing the No Alibi trail at 4200ft.

Ski Area Descents - future racing venue

Description:	At least two race lines and one recreational line are planned in the ski area
Usage:	Directional: Top down, Hike with caution, predominantly downhill bike traffic
Notes:	The difficulty of the race courses reflects the skiing zones they reside in with professional level challenges in the course around Chair 1, experienced racers' course around Chair 2 and beginning racers being sent toward Chair 3. Given intermittent or occasional access to lodge facilities a catch trail traverses below all three trails at an elevation sufficient enough to deliver rides as close as possible to the SNO Park while still providing enough relief for an effective run. When permitted to finish races at either lodge, temporary or semi-permanent race features would be constructed.

Cook's Cabin Getaway

Description:	Dense, technical descent with challenges similar to neighboring Trail 110 but less hiker friendly.
Usage:	Bidirectional: Multi-use traffic expected
Notes:	Given the staged gates of the Summit Rd. the Getaway could be an early season descent before the top is snow free. Ample relief from Cooks Cabin to the Day Mt.

Spokane picnic table provides the opportunity for many flowing traverses.

Trails previously proposed by other trail plans

Trail 141

Description:	East - West connector from Trail 110 to Trail 140 ≈1000ft N. of Park Office
Recommendation:	Do Not Build. This trail would plunge into a tight valley, cross a formidable creek, and then climb quickly up the opposite slope only to skip a small section of Hwy 206. While the terrain could be interesting, the expense could not be justified by its limited usage.

Trail 153

Description:	Condo Bypass downhill and east of the Lodge 2 parking lot
Recommendation:	Do Not Build. While we do propose a trail in a similar area this particular line appears to transect known property development.

Trail 180

Description:	East - West ridge run from Kit Carson Loop Rd to Day Mt. Spokane Rd. north of the Deep Creek drainage
Recommendation:	Consider. Park visitors from north of Spokane may choose to enter the park through the Day Mt. Spokane Rd. entrance, but their numbers would be small enough as to not prioritize this build over many others.

Trail 191

Description:	Traversing descent from the summit of Mt. Spokane on the south face ending at the Bald Knob Campground.
Recommendation:	Build. We have proposed a similar trail above (see trail No Alibi: Top to Bottom) which utilizes Trail 130 to approach the campground from below.